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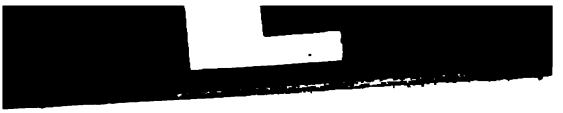
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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
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1918



ONE SHILLING.

The Dagonet Ballads.

(CHIEFLY FROM "THE REFEREE.")

BY

GEORGE R. SIMS.

LONDON:
JOHN P. FULLER,
WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.

153

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

THREE BRASS BALLS.

BY GEORGE R. SIMS.

Reprinted from the "Weekly Dispatch."

CONTENTS:—

PROLOGUE. A GOLD BRACELET.
A FLANNEL PETTICOAT.
A DIAMOND RING. A SUIT OF BLACK.
A GOLD LOCKET.
A DRESS SUIT. A WEDDING RING.
A DIAMOND NECKLACE.
A PAIR OF BLANKETS. A SURPLICE.
A SILVER WATCH.
A PAIR OF BOOTS. A FLAT IRON.
A "SHAKESPEARE."
A CORAL AND BELLS. A MUSICAL BOX.
A PAIR OF EARRINGS.
A FAMILY BIBLE. VARIOUS.
A WAR MEDAL.

JOHN P. FULLER, WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.



THE DAGONET BALLADS.



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(CHIEFLY FROM THE "REFEREE.")

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GEORGE R. SIMS.

LONDON:

J. P. FULLER, WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.

1881.

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918



To HENRY SAMPSON,

In recognition of a not uneventful Journalistic Companionship, these Ballads are Dedicated by his Friend and Workfellow,

GEORGE R. SIMS.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
TOLD TO THE MISSIONARY	1
IN THE WORKHOUSE: CHRISTMAS DAY	8
THE LEVEL CROSSING	16
IN A CELLAR IN SOHO	24
SAL GROGAN'S FACE	30
IN THE SHIPKA PASS	38
BILLY'S ROSE	44
ORINSKA	52
DURING HER MAJESTY'S PLEASURE	58
TWO WOMEN	63
THE LAST LETTER	69
POLLY	76
AN OLD FOOL: A FASHIONABLE CONVERSATION	85
KATE MALONEY	90
A FELLOW-FEELING	96
MOLL JARVIS O' MORLEY: A CONSTABLE'S TALE	101
THE DEVONSHIRE LANES	111
LE QUART D'HEURE DE RABELAIS	113
A GARDEN SONG	115
IN LOVE AND WAR	117
A STREET SONG	118
A SILLY OLD MAN: A SEASIDE DITTY	120
FICKLE AS THE WIND	123
A SET-OFF	125
A PASTORAL	127

THE DAGONET BALLADS.

TOLD TO THE MISSIONARY.

JUST look 'ee here, Mr. Preacher, you 're a-goin' a bit too fur;
There isn't the man as is livin' as I'd let say a word agen her.
She 's a rum-lookin' bitch, that I own to, and there *is* a fierce look in her eyes,
But if any cove sez as she 's vicious, I sez in his teeth, he lies.
Soh! gently, old 'ooman; come here, now, and set by my side on the bed;
I wonder who 'll have yer, my beauty, when him as you 're all to 's dead!

There, stow your perlaver a minit; I knows as my
end is nigh;
Is a cove to turn round on his dog, like, just 'cos he's
goin' to die?

Oh, of course, I was sartin you'd say it. It's allus
the same with you,
Give it us straight now, guv'nor,—what would you
have me do?
Think of my soul? I do, sir. Think of my
Saviour?—Right!
Don't be afeard of the bitch, sir; *she's* not a-goin'
to bite.
Tell me about my Saviour—tell me that tale
agen,
How He prayed for the coves as killed Him, and
died for the worst of men.
It's a tale as I always liked, sir; and bound for the
'ternal shore,
I thinks it aloud to myself, sir, and I likes it more
and more.

I've thumbed it out in the Bible, and I know it now
by heart,
And it's put like steam in my boiler,, and made me
ready to start.



I ain't not afeard to die now; I've been a bit bad
in my day,
But I know when I knocks at them portals there's
One as won't say me nay.
And it's thinkin' about that story, and all as He
did for us,
As makes me so fond o' my dawg, sir, specially
now I'm wus;
For a-savin' o' folks who'd kill us is a beautiful act,
the which
I never heard tell on o' no one, 'cept o' Him and o'
that there bitch.

Yes, you may open yer eyes, sir—but I say by the
Lord it's true!
I ha' told the story often; sit 'e down, while I tell it
to you.
Dang this 'ere coughin', it stops me—it's a cold I
caught last year,
As has tumbled my ninepins over, and lef me
a-dyin' here.
I was out on the drunk and caught it—lor, what a
cuss is drink!—
But there, when a cove's as I am, it don't do him
good to think.
I must cut it yer short, I reckon, for whenever I
tries to speak
I feels like a bloomin' babby—I gets so infernal
weak.

'Twas five years ago come Chrismus, maybe you
remember the row,
There was scares about hydryphoby—same as there
be just now;
And the bobbies came down on us costers—came
in a reggerlar wax,
And them as 'ud got no licence was summerned to
pay the tax.
But I had a friend among 'em, and he come in a
friendly way,
And he sez, "You must settle your dawg, Bill,
unless you've a mind to pay."
The missus was dyin' wi' fever—I'd made a mistake
in my pitch,
I *couldn't* afford to keep her, so I sez, "I'll drownd
the bitch!"

I wasn't a-goin' to *lose* her, I warn't such a brute,
you bet,
As to leave her to die by inches o' hunger, and cold,
and wet;
I never said now't to the missus—we both on us
liked her well—
But I takes her the follerin' Sunday down to the
Grand Canell.
I gets her tight by the collar—the Lord forgive my
sin!
And, kneelin' down on the towpath, I ducks the
poor beast in.

She gave just a sudden whine like, then a look
come into her eyes
As 'ull last for ever in mine, sir, up to the day I
dies.

And a chill came over my heart then, and thinkin'
I heard her moan,
I held her below the water, beating her skull with
a stone.
You can see the mark of it now, sir—that place on
the top of 'er 'ed—
And sudden she ceased to struggle, and I fancied as
she was dead.
I shall never know how it happened, but goin' to
loose my hold,
My knees slipped over the towpath, and into the
stream I rolled;
Down like a log I went, sir, and my eyes were filled
with mud,
And the water was tinged above me with a mur-
dered creeter's blood.

I gave myself up for lost then, and I cursed in my
wild despair,
And sudden I rose to the surfis, and a su'thing
grabbed my hair—

Grabbed at my hair, and loosed it, and grabbed me agin by the throat,
And *she* was a-holdin' my 'ed up, and somehow I kep' afloat.
I can't tell yer 'ow she done it, for I never know'd no more,
Till somebody seized my collar, and giv' me a lug ashore;
And my head was queer and dizzy, but I see as the bitch was weak,
And she lay on her side a-pantin', waitin' for me to speak.

* * * *

What did I do with *her,* eh? You'd a hardly need to ax,
But I sold my barrer a Monday, an' paid the bloomin' tax.

* * * *

That's right, Mr. Preacher, pat her—you ain't not afeard on her now!—
Dang this here tellin' o' stories—look at the muck on my brow!

I'm weaker, an' weaker, an' weaker; I fancy the end ain't fur,
But you know why here on my deathbed I think o' the Lord and her.

And He who by men's hands tortured uttered that
prayer divine,
'Ull pardon me linkin' Him like with a dawg as
forgave like mine.
When the Lord in His mercy calls me to my last
eternal pitch,
I know as you 'll treat her kindly—promise to take
my bitch!



IN THE WORKHOUSE.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

IT is Christmas Day in the Workhouse,
And the cold bare walls are bright
With garlands of green and holly,
And the place is a pleasant sight:
For with clean-washed hands and faces,
In a long and hungry line
The paupers sit at the tables,
For this is the hour they dine.

And the guardians and their ladies,
Although the wind is east,
Have come in their furs and wrappers,
To watch their charges feast;



To smile and be condescending,
Put pudding on pauper plates,
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet
They've paid for—with the rates.

Oh, the paupers are meek and lowly
With their "Thank'ee kindly, mum's";
So long as they fill their stomachs,
What matter it whence it comes?
But one of the old men mutters,
And pushes his plate aside:
"Great God!" he cries; "but it chokes me!
For this is the day *she* died."

The guardians gazed in horror,
The master's face went white;
"Did a pauper refuse their pudding?"
"Could their ears believe aright?"
Then the ladies clutched their husbands,
Thinking the man would die,
Struck by a bolt, or something,
By the outraged One on high.

But the pauper sat for a moment,
Then rose 'mid a silence grim,
For the others had ceased to chatter,
And trembled in every limb.

He looked at the guardians' ladies,
Then, eyeing their lords, he said,
"I eat not the food of villains
Whose hands are foul and red:

"Whose victims cry for vengeance
From their dank, unhallowed graves."
"He's drunk!" said the workhouse master,
"Or else he's mad, and raves."
"Not drunk or mad," cried the pauper,
"But only a hunted beast,
Who, torn by the hounds and mangled,
Declines the vulture's feast.

"I care not a curse for the guardians,
And I won't be dragged away.
Just let me have the fit out,
It's only on Christmas Day
That the black past comes to goad me,
And prey on my burning brain;
I'll tell you the rest in a whisper,—
I swear I won't shout again.

"Keep your hands off me, curse you!
Hear me right out to the end.
You come here to see how paupers
The season of Christmas spend.

You come here to watch us feeding,
As they watch the captured beast.
Hear why a penniless pauper
Spits on your paltry feast.

"Do you think I will take your bounty,
And let you smile and think
You're doing a noble action
With the parish's meat and drink?
Where is my wife, you traitors—
The poor old wife you slew?
Yes, by the God above us,
My Nance was killed by you!

"Last winter my wife lay dying,
Starved in a filthy den;
I had never been to the parish,—
I came to the parish then.
I swallowed my pride in coming,
For, ere the ruin came,
I held up my head as a trader,
And I bore a spotless name.

"I came to the parish, craving
Bread for a starving wife,
Bread for the woman who'd loved me
Through fifty years of life;

And what do you think they told me,
  Mocking my awful grief?
That 'the House' was open to us,
  But they wouldn't give 'out relief.'

"I slunk to the filthy alley—
  'Twas a cold, raw Christmas eve—
And the bakers' shops were open,
  Tempting a man to thieve;
But I clenched my fists together,
  Holding my head awry,
So I came to her empty-handed,
  And mournfully told her why.

"Then I told her 'the House' was open;
  She had heard of the ways of *that,*
For her bloodless cheeks went crimson,
  And up in her rags she sat,
Crying, 'Bide the Christmas here, John,
  We've never had one apart;
I think I can bear the hunger,—
  The other would break my heart.'

"All through that eve I watched her,
  Holding her hand in mine,
Praying the Lord, and weeping
  Till my lips were salt as brine.



I asked her once if she hungered,
And as she answered 'No,'
The moon shone in at the window
Set in a wreath of snow.

"Then the room was bathed in glory,
And I saw in my darling's eyes
The far-away look of wonder
That comes when the spirit flies;
And her lips were parched and parted,
And her reason came and went,
For she raved of our home in Devon,
Where our happiest years were spent.

"And the accents, long forgotten,
Came back to the tongue once more,
For she talked like the country lassie
I woo'd by the Devon shore.
Then she rose to her feet and trembled,
And fell on the rags and moaned,
And, 'Give me a crust—I'm famished—
For the love of God!' she groaned.

"I rushed from the room like a madman,
And flew to the workhouse gate,
Crying, 'Food for a dying woman!'
And the answer came, 'Too late.'

They drove me away with curses;
Then I fought with a dog in the street,
And tore from the mongrel's clutches
A crust he was trying to eat.

"Back, through the filthy by-lanes!
Back, through the trampled slush!
Up to the crazy garret,
Wrapped in an awful hush.
My heart sank down at the threshold,
And I paused with a sudden thrill,
For there in the silv'ry moonlight
My Nance lay, cold and still.

"Up to the blackened ceiling
The sunken eyes were cast—
I knew on those lips all bloodless
My name had been the last;
She'd called for her absent husband—
O God! had I but known!—
Had called in vain, and in anguish
Had died in that den—*alone*.

"Yes, there, in a land of plenty,
Lay a loving woman dead,
Cruelly starved and murdered
For a loaf of the parish bread.

At yonder gate, last Christmas,
I craved for a human life.
You, who would feast us paupers,
What of my murdered wife!

* * * *

"There, get ye gone to your dinners;
Don't mind me in the least;
Think of the happy paupers
Eating your Christmas feast;
And when you recount their blessings
In your smug parochial way,
Say what you did for *me*, too,
Only last Christmas Day."

THE LEVEL CROSSING.

THE eight o'clock up 's just gone, sir—the
London express, you mean?
There ain't not another as stops here,
not till the nine-fifteen.
Got any luggage a-comin'?—Oh, only been here
for the day.
Yes, it 's a quietish village; never was over-gay.
We're glad of a stranger sometimes, and a bit of
the Lunnon news;
It 's lonely up here at the station, and easy to get
the blues,
For I 'm on till the early morning; and many and
many a night
There 's never a human being as comes to bless my
sight.

For the last of the trains as stops here is the parly at 10 P.M.,
And then I'm alone with my thoughts like, and I ain't always fond o' them.
Out yonder's a level crossing, and it's part o' my work, you know,
To watch here at night for the waggons a-travellin' to and fro.
Been any accidents? Bless you! we're a boon to the local Press;
The Company has me stop here just to try for to make 'em less.
Why, only last year a farmer—but haven't you heard the tale
How old Farmer Burton o' Birley was killed by the Limited Mail?

I thought as you must ha' heard it, for it made a regular fuss,
And they held an inquiry on it, and they laid the blame on us.
We ought to ha' seen and ha' warned him, so the chaps on the paper said;
But we none of us knew as he'd got there, not till we see him dead.
They brought it in accidental, the jury as tried the case;
But it was no accident neither, though it's rather a likely place.

Come and sit down in my shanty, you've nearly an hour to wait,
If you care for the rest I can tell you the story of Burton's fate.

Never mind how I know it—there's plenty o' folks beside
As knows about Master Burton, and why he came here and died;
For the women ha' talked it over, and whenever that comes about,
Wherever there's secrets hidden, the women 'll hunt 'em out.
They wagged their heads when he married poor penniless Mercy Leigh
Right on the top of her hearin' as her lover was drowned at sea.
Lord, how the women chattered—scandalous things they said!
Hintin' she wanted a husband to hide her sin with the dead!

This Mercy Leigh was the daughter of decentish honest folks,
And Burton had made her an offer, but she treated his words as jokes,
For Mercy was barely twenty, and Burton was sixty-two;
He'd made a bit at the farmin', and was counted as well to do;

He made it a joke himself like, his love for "the pretty child,"
And if anyone chaffed him about it, that's what he said, and smiled;
But under his broad thick waistcoat, right in his kind old heart,
I know as her nonsense pained him, though he took it in right good part.

It was pretty well known in the village that Mercy had set her cap
At the son of old Barnes, the builder, a dare-devil sailor chap;
And when he was off his cruises, and home for a week or so,
You'd meet him and Mercy together wherever you'd chance to go.
And the last time they parted he told her—that's what the gossips say—
That he reckoned, with luck and weather, he'd be but a month away,
And when he came back he'd wed her—he pledged her his solemn word;—
He'd perished at sea with his vessel—that was the next we heard.

Now, the very next day this Mercy was seen, with a long white face,
A-makin' for Chumleigh Meadows—that was old Burton's place—

And one of his people told me as she stayed there
half the day,
And they heard her a-cryin' and sobbin', and
moanin' her heart away.
But when they came out the farmer had gotten her
hand gripped tight,
And he kissed her, and said, "God bless you! I'll
speak to your folks to-night."
It was known on the morrow through Birley that
Mercy had promised to wed
The farmer of Chumleigh Meadows—but we noticed
her eyes were red.

'Twas plain as her heart was buried away in the
distant sea,
For I saw her the weddin' mornin', and her looks
had a tale for me.
But she went through the service bravely, and the
farmer's big brown face
Was bright with his love for Mercy, though he
stood in a dead man's place.
I think they was happy at first, too, for he wor-
shipped the ground she trod,
And went here and there like a sheep-dog, obeyin'
her every nod.
Yet he'd given his name and honour to a woman
who'd told him—well,
What seldom to one who'd wed her a woman has
dared to tell.

They were married six months and over, when, all of a sudden, flew
News through the streets of Birley, as nobody thought was true,—
That Barnes had escaped the shipwreck, and was back from a lengthened trip;
He'd been rescued and carried to Melbourne aboard of a sailin' ship.
She heard it first at the station—I shall never forget her cry.
We carried her into this room here—I thought she was like to die;
But she got all right in a minit, and, takin' her husband's arm,
She walked like a tipsy woman back thro' the fields to the farm.

In less than a month from that, sir, old Burton lay here dead;
Here, at this level crossing—"Accident," so they said.
But I know, for the woman told me who'd seen her before the 'quest,
That for many a night he'd murmur, and talk in his troubled rest;
And he'd wake in the night, and tell her, if it chanced that he should die,
That the hand of God would have freed her for a higher and holier tie.

And the eve as it happened he kissed her, with
tears in his eyes, and said,
"Mercy, my darling! remember the *reason* that we
were wed."

When he left her that night he told her he'd a
lawyer to see in town.
He was crossing there for the platform when the
engine struck him down.
That's how the jury got it, but *I* know a thing or
two;
And I say that night when he kissed her, he knew
what he meant to do;
For his will was made, and it told her to marry the
sailor chap
If it pleased the Almighty to take him—accident
too, mayhap?
She went away from the village, and the farm and
the house were sold,
And she'd married young Barnes ere her mourning
was barely a fortnight old.

A cold-blooded thing to do, sir?—Not a bit of it.
She was right;
For she knew what was wearing his heart out when
he went to his death that night.
He laid down his life that a father, cast up from the
jaws of the sea,
Might hallow before God's altar the mother of one
to be.

It was just a month to the day, sir, since Burton
was found here dead,
That the baby was born to Mercy.—Why, bless us!
the lights are red!
I must run to the box and change 'em. What does
that signal mean?
Why, that I must be saying good-night, sir, for here
is the nine-fifteen.

IN A CELLAR IN SOHO.

NOT a word! not a word, Marguerite!
It 's the step of the priest on the stairs.
Hark! he comes with his soft-falling feet,
Just to trap me, the wretch, unawares.
Put your hand on my mouth if I speak,
If I breathe but a word of the past;
I can tell the old fox by his creak;
Stand your back to the door—make it fast!

'Tis not he! Now I breathe! Give me air,
For I choke in this horrible stench;
Let the hunted beast die in his lair
Like a beast that is human, and French.
Fling the door on its hinges, I say,
And keep back the walls, lest they crush
And encompass and mangle their prey,
For the fever consumes me—Hark! hush!

All my brain is aflame, and it reels,
And runs back to that terrible time,
And I know not whose figure 'tis kneels,
Or whose lips breathe the words of my clime.
Is it thou, O my love! that I left
Dead and cold on the blood-sodden graves?
Or art priest, of all honour bereft,
Come to spy on the outcast who raves?

What was that? 'Twas the roll of the drum.
Up and out, for our lives, Marguerite!
Seize the musket hung yonder, and come;
For the troops of Versailles line the street.
See! our comrades are rushing this way,
And the city is all in a blaze;
We must fight for our lives, love, to-day,
In the kingdom of death—Pere la Chaise.

Here, my own, 'mid the tombs of the dead,
Let us fight for the children of France;
In the wind wave our banners of red,
In the May sun our drawn sabres glance.
Now, O Liberty, goddess of men!
We are doomed, but we kneel at thy shrine.
We are one to the foul traitors' ten,
Let our blood lave thine altars divine.

Kiss me here, 'mid the graves, Marguerite;
  Grip your sabre, and crouch by this tomb.
Cut them down as they pass at your feet—
  Crying, "Traitors, you come to your doom!"
Do you see, love, the legends they bear?—
  These headstones that shelter us now—
And the yellow wreaths, too, "*A nos freres,*"
  For our brothers, remember our vow!

For a tyrant our land was betrayed,
  For a coward our heroes were slain,
Through our life-blood would Bonaparte wade
  To the height of his glory again.
Though his throne has been hurled in the dust,
  He has covered our banners with shame,
And our France is a prey to the lust
  Of the fiends who dishonour and maim.

And the troops of Versailles, what are they?
  Tools of knaves who but plot his return.
Men of Paris, they're vipers to slay,
  Send their souls into Hades to burn!
Wipe his stain from our honour, and rise
  From this carnage ennobled and free.
God of justice, we cry to the skies,—
  When have people been tortured as we?

Marguerite, are you there with your sword?
Pretty wench! Why, it 's red to the hilt!
Oh, they fight like she-devils, this horde
Of fair women—young—slenderly built.
'Tis thy glory, O France, when our girls
And our women for thee give their lives,
When a weak arm the keen sabre whirls,
And aims straight at our Fatherland's gyves.

Now the balls come like hail on the stones,
We are pent in and caught by the foe;
Do you hear me, sweetheart? How she moans!
Creep away through the tombs—let us go!
Marguerite! Marguerite! Do you hear?
Sweet, how bloody your hands are, and lips!
You are wounded, my brave Marguerite!
Curse the fiends! It 's her life-blood that drips!

You are dead, Marguerite, for our France,
And your name shall be writ on her scroll;
When they find your poor body, perchance
They will maul you, and dig you a hole.
I must fly—I have fought—we have lost.
Vive la Commune! but still *sauve qui peut.*
Henceforth I'm a waif, tempest-tost,
But I fly, for Thiers' butchers pursue.

Where's our crown—that poor girl's and my own?
Where the laurels we won in the fight?
She is dead—I'm an outcast—alone,
Yet we fought for the people and right.
Now the land that I loved claims my life.
Were I known, even here in the street,
Men would shun me; and as to my wife,
By what name would they call Marguerite?

* * * *

Curse you, man—you 're the priest after all!
Lo, the mist clears away from my eyes,
And if any strange words I let fall
In my ravings just now, they were lies.
But I'm ill, and I'm hungry—and, priest,
In this den I go mad, and at times,
When I rave, snarl, and snap like a beast,
You might fancy me tortured by crimes.

I 'm a teacher of languages, please,
And the fever has stricken me down;
All my papers are right—look at these,
There 's my name and my age—How you frown!
Do you think I 'm a —— Curse you, you know!
You'll betray me! Bah! what need I care?
Paris butchers can't kill in Soho.
Fling that door open wide! Give me air!

I 'm a Communist, priest, at death's door,
  Far away from the France that I love.
Just one boon, ere I die, I implore,—
  As you hope for God's mercy above:
When my soul clasps my own Marguerite,
  And my body man lays to its rest,
Put her name on the stone at my feet
  And a clod of French earth on my breast.



SAL GROGAN'S FACE.

THERE on the right's Sal Grogan, leaning against the bar;
Wait till she turns her head round—now you can see the scar.
Isn't it something loathsome, that horribly weird grimace?—
The burns that have blurred her features give her a demon's face.
She's worse than the wandering leper, for whenever she goes about
Folks shudder, and ask in anger, "Who lets such monsters out?"
And yet if they knew her story, and how those wounds were got,
I fancy the hardest-hearted would pity her awful lot.

You wouldn't believe Sal Grogan, that poor, distorted wretch,
Was ever a fine young woman, and reckoned a decent catch,
Shapely and plump and pretty,—and many a good old pal,
Who lived in the court that she did, fell out for the love of Sal,—
Fell out and had fearful quarrels; and many and many a fight
There's been in this very gin-shop, for the hag you see to-night.
But Sally, she turned her nose up, and flouted the lot with pride.
Drink up your liquor, she hears us! I'll tell you the rest outside.

I couldn't have stood it much longer—that awful face of hers,
Those horrible wounds and wrinkles, that ghastly mass of blurs!
It's a sickening sight to look at—did you see how the features run?—
There, let me get on with my story,—Sal flouted 'em ev'ry one:
Then all of a sudden she married a fellow called Handsome Jack—
Went and got married one Sunday behind her father's back.

A decent chap was her father, as folks in alleys go,
And Sal had a very good reason for wishing him not to know.

Grogan had got the credit of being a bit too flash,
For nobody knew exactly how he got hold of cash;
He was always in bed in the day-time, and seldom went out till night,
And folks in the alley whispered, he *had* to keep out of sight.
But Sal she worshipped the fellow, never a doubt of that,
And if anyone spoke against him, she answered 'em plain and pat.
For a couple of years, or over, affairs went smooth and well,
Then suddenly down the alley gossips had tales to tell.

One had heard Grogan swearing, and had caught the sound of blows
(The walls were of lath-and-plaster, and the houses stood in rows);
Another had seen Sal crying, and noticed a bruise on her cheek,

And then the women remembered she'd stayed
indoors for a week.
But at last the whole court knew it, for the sounds
of the strife grew high,
And Sally ran out all bloody, with a big cut over
her eye;
Jack at her heels came swearing, and straight at
her throat he flew,
And beating her down he kicked her, splitting her
cheek in two.

Then some of the women hissed him, but he gave
her another kick
Right in the breast, and this time—— Faugh! but
it makes one sick
To tell of that deed inhuman—it's common enough,
they say,
And down in these courts it happens pretty well
every day.
Poor Sal was just like a dead thing, but they let
Jack slink away,
And when he was safe, policemen were beckoned
to where she lay.
They bundled her on to a stretcher, and carried her
off to Guy's;
She was out in about a fortnight, with the loss of
one of her eyes.

She yearned for her home and husband—for through all the weary time
He'd never been near to see her; she fancied he feared his crime.
She had sent him a gentle message, saying that she forgave;
She worshipped the man, remember; she was only his humble slave.
She came to her home, and entered, hoping to find him there;—
And she found him there, with another—a woman young and fair.
She knew the girl in a moment, 'twas a white-faced, simpering jade
She'd seen before with her husband when the seeds of strife were laid.

She looked in his eyes a second, as she stood at the open door,
Then called on her God to witness he should see her face no more.
One glance of scorn and of loathing on the shameless pair she hurled,
Then gasping for breath she staggered out on the pitiless world.

* * * *

Months slipped away, and Sal Grogan no more in the court was met.
Till one night she was seen near her father's, talking to Hagan's Bet.
Her figure was shrunk and wasted, and her face had grown so thin
That the scum of the alley saw it, and hushed their infernal din.

But right on the sudden silence rang a woman's piercing cry,
As flames from the crowded houses shot roaring up in the sky.
It was but the work of a moment, the flames rose higher and higher,
And spread till the crazy buildings were wrapped in a sheet of fire.
The court was filled in an instant with the black and blinding smoke,
And the crowd surged down the entry—an easyish one to choke;
But high above all the uproar Sal heard a woman shout
That Jack was drunk in the building, and no one could get him out.

The white-faced wanton knew it—she'd left him there and fled;

"She'd tried to save him," she snivelled,—"he was tipsy, asleep on the bed,
She couldn't help it—she tried to—but her life was her life, you know;
Let them as jawed so save him; why, it was death to go!"
The light o' love spoke truly, the flames had spread and spread;
Who went up that burning staircase might reckon themselves as dead.
Ha! what is that?—a woman?—by Heaven, the fellow's wife!
She has leapt in the fiery furnace! Sal Grogan! back for your life!

Too late—she has gone for ever—up to an awful death.
Men strain their eyes in terror, and the great crowd holds its breath.
"The roof is giving and melting!" As they shout the lead falls fast
In beads of the brightest silver, hot from the fiery blast.
Back went the crowd in a moment—it saw that the end was near—
And then with a rush ran forward, raising a deafening cheer:

For down through the falling timbers, down through the smoke and flame,
Bearing her heavy burden, the brave Sal Grogan came.

And just as she reached the bottom she staggered, and moaned, and fell,
But they dragged her, scorched and senseless, out of that burning hell.
She had paid a price for her daring, for full in her face, poor lass!
The molten lead had fallen and left it a scalded mass.
They thought that she'd die, but she didn't, for she lived to be the sight—
The horribly blemished creature you saw in the bar to-night.
She's taken to drink, they tell me. The husband? Oh, they say
He muttered a drunken "Curse you!" and went off to his wench next day.

* * * *

Oh, who would shudder or sicken, if he knew of the deed of grace
Enshrined in the ghastly features of poor Sal Grogan's face!



IN THE SHIPKA PASS.

YES, it is over, the victory 's won,
The smoke is beginning to roll away;
Just for a little the fighting 's done,
Still is the field of the fearful fray.
Draped on the arm with the badge of red,
Over the fields the searchers go,
Seeking the wounded among the dead,
And waving their lanterns to and fro.

A fair-faced woman is with the band—
Holiest hers of a woman's works!
"Sister Louise of the Gentle Hand,"
So she is called by the wounded Turks;
And never such beautiful eyes, I ween,
Lighted a soldier's path to God,
And never a fairer dame was seen
Kneeling by death on the blood-stained sod.

English? Oh, yes! they can tell you that.
And wedded—she wears the emblem ring;
A widow they guess, when the soldiers chat—
That is the most your questions bring;
But the weight of an awful grief she bears
Hidden away in her heaving breast,
And ever the look on her face she wears
Of the soul that is weary and pines for rest.

But here in the Shipka Pass to-night,
Dropping behind in the surgeon's train,
She glides, like an angel of holy light,
Down through the rows of the gory slain—
Shutting the lids of the staring eyes,
Stretching the limbs for their last repose,
Catching the whispered word that lies
On the lips that the thrills of death unclose.

Here, 'mid the wreck of a thousand braves,
Shattered and shot in a hopeless cause,
White and wan in the moonlight waves,
O'er a heap of slain see the sister pause—
Pause for a moment, and reel away,
Smitten as if by a sabre stroke,
For there at her feet two wounded lay,
Their faces black with the battle smoke.

She has gazed on death in a hundred shapes,
And the horrible wounds of the modern strife,
But now from her lips a cry escapes
As she bends her ear for the sounds of life.
They live! they breathe—yet she turns to fly,
And her face is hot with a great white heat,
For there together these wounded lie,
Two loves betrayed, at her craven feet.

Husband and lover! O God above!
If mercy there be for the worst of sins,
Grant that her prayer to the throne of love
Some balm for her horrible anguish wins!
Husband and lover! and side by side,
With their life-blood flowing, a mingled stream.
What wonder the shivering woman cried—
"Wake me, O God! 'tis a ghastly dream!

"'Tis a dream—a dream of the long ago.
I am gay to-night in the giddy whirl;
And Raymond he follows me to and fro
With his ceaseless chiding of 'Foolish girl!'
He is jealous, this burly lord of mine,
Jealous of rattlepate handsome Guy;
I am sure we are careful to draw the line,
But I like to tease him—I know not why.

"'Tis a dream—a dream; I have left *his* home—
He struck me, wounded my woman's pride;
We are hiding in lodgings—abroad—in Rome,
And the tale of our flight is far and wide.
Guy hears from home; he has trusty friends,
Who give us the news of my husband's quest;
In a letter to-day one tidings sends,
My shame is safe in my husband's breast.

"I hate him now! Had he sought the law,
The law would at least have set me free.
What was it stayed his hand? *He saw*
That Guy might have given his name to me.
A fig for such love as his, I say,
It wasn't a thing to be named with Guy's;
For me *he* has flung the world away,
And I am the world in his noble eyes.

"'Tis a dream—a dream. Do I hear aright?
He has told my people 'twas his the blame;
And now he is going abroad to fight;
With tears in his eyes he shields my fame!
Raymond! my husband! O God, I was mad,
Ever to torture a heart so true!
He is my husband—O that he had
Never a cause my love to rue!

"I have parted for ever from Guy to-day;
Never again will I look on his face;
From the haunts of men I will wander away,
Hiding for ever my soul's disgrace.
The glorious East is ablaze with war;
In a mission of mercy may guilt atone—
I am Sister Louise, of the Ambulance Corps,
I am here with the dead to-night, alone.

"Spare me my reason, O Lord, awhile!
The blast of the night wind cools my brow.
A wanton and wicked, am I too vile
For Thy cleansing fires to purge me now?
'Tis a dream—a dream—blood has turned my brain;
I will not look at these things below;
There are the lights of the surgeon's train—
Oh, but they hear me not—on they go!

"How cold comes the blast of the icy north!
It seizes my throat and stops my breath;
Or has Thy merciful word gone forth?
Are these the chills of the coming death?
Husband and lover, or dying or dead,
Room, if your brave souls be not loth,
Room for the woman to lay her head
Who ruined your lives, and loved you both.

"Husband and lover—oh, speak one word
Here in the gloom of the Eastern night!
They answer me not, they have not heard,
Or, hearing, they have not heard aright.
How came you lying here side by side,
Here in the ranks of the slaughtered Turks?
Speak to your mistress—tell your bride,
While still in my brain some reason lurks.

"Both of them dead! I am glad 'tis so,
For, taking a hand of each in mine,
I can kiss them both now they 'll neither know,
And whisper their names to the King divine.
Husband and lover, here hand in hand
Our bodies will lie in the blood-stained grass,
And at dawn to-morrow the searching band
Will give us one grave in the Shipka Pass."



BILLY'S ROSE.

BILLY'S dead, and gone to glory—so is Billy's sister Nell:
There's a tale I know about them were I poet I would tell;
Soft it comes, with perfume laden, like a breath of country air
Wafted down the filthy alley, bringing fragrant odours there.

In that vile and filthy alley, long ago one winter's day,
Dying quick of want and fever, hapless, patient Billy lay,
While beside him sat his sister, in the garret's dismal gloom,
Cheering with her gentle presence Billy's pathway to the tomb.

Many a tale of elf and fairy did she tell the dying child,
Till his eyes lost half their anguish, and his worn, wan features smiled:
Tales herself had heard hap-hazard, caught amid the Babel roar,
Lisped about by tiny gossips playing round their mothers' door.

Then she felt his wasted fingers tighten feebly as she told
How beyond this dismal alley lay a land of shining gold,
Where, when all the pain was over—where, when all the tears were shed—
He would be a white-frocked angel, with a gold thing on his head.

Then she told some garbled story of a kind-eyed Saviour's love,
How He'd built for little children great big play-grounds up above,
Where they sang and played at hop-scotch and at horses all the day,
And where beadles and policemen never frightened them away.

This was Nell's idea of Heaven—just a bit of what she'd heard,
With a little bit invented, and a little bit inferred.
But her brother lay and listened, and he seemed to understand,
For he closed his eyes and murmured he could see the Promised Land.

"Yes," he whispered, "I can see it—I can see it, sister Nell;
Oh, the children look so happy, and they're all so strong and well;
I can see them there with Jesus—He is playing with them, too!
Let us run away and join them, if there's room for me and you."

She was eight, this little maiden, and her life had all been spent
In the garret and the alley, where they starved to pay the rent;
Where a drunken father's curses and a drunken mother's blows
Drove her forth into the gutter from the day's dawn to its close.

But she knew enough, this outcast, just to tell the sinking boy,
"You must die before you're able all these blessings to enjoy.
You must die," she whispered, "Billy, and I am not even ill;
But I'll come to you, dear brother,—yes, I promise that I will.

"You are dying, little brother,—you are dying, oh, so fast;
I heard father say to mother that he knew you couldn't last.
They will put you in a coffin, then you'll wake and be up there,
While I'm left alone to suffer in this garret bleak and bare."

"Yes, I know it," answered Billy. "Ah, but, sister, I don't mind,
Gentle Jesus will not beat me; He's not cruel or unkind.
But I can't help thinking, Nelly, I should like to take away
Something, sister, that you gave me, I might look at every day.

"In the summer you remember how the mission took us out
To a great green lovely meadow, where we played and ran about,
And the van that took us halted by a sweet bright patch of land,
Where the fine red blossoms grew, dear, half as big as mother's hand.

"Nell, I asked the good kind teacher what they called such flowers as those,
And he told me, I remember, that the pretty name was rose.
I have never seen them since, dear—how I wish that I had one!
Just to keep and think of you, Nell, when I'm up beyond the sun."

Not a word said little Nelly; but at night, when Billy slept,
On she flung her scanty garments and then down the stairs she crept.
Through the silent streets of London she ran nimbly as a fawn,
Running on and running ever till the night had changed to dawn.

When the foggy sun had risen, and the mist had
cleared away,
All around her, wrapped in snowdrift, there the
open country lay.
She was tired, her limbs were frozen, and the roads
had cut her feet,
But there came no flowery gardens her poor tearful
eyes to greet.

She had traced the road by asking—she had learnt
the way to go;
She had found the famous meadow—it was wrapped
in cruel snow;
Not a buttercup or daisy, not a single verdant
blade
Showed its head above its prison. Then she knelt
her down and prayed.

With her eyes upcast to heaven, down she sank
upon the ground,
And she prayed to God to tell her where the roses
might be found.
Then the cold blast numbed her senses, and her
sight grew strangely dim;
And a sudden, awful tremor seemed to seize her
every limb.

"Oh, a rose!" she moaned, "good Jesus—just a rose to take to Bill!"
And as she prayed a chariot came thundering down the hill;
And a lady sat there, toying with a red rose, rare and sweet;
As she passed she flung it from her, and it fell at Nelly's feet.

Just a word her lord had spoken caused her ladyship to fret,
And the rose had been his present, so she flung it in a pet;
But the poor, half-blinded Nelly thought it fallen from the skies,
And she murmured, "Thank you, Jesus!" as she clasped the dainty prize.

* * * *

Lo that night from out the alley did a child's soul pass away,
From dirt and sin and misery to where God's children play.
Lo that night a wild, fierce snowstorm burst in fury o'er the land,
And at morn they found Nell frozen, with the red rose in her hand.

Billy's dead, and gone to glory—so is Billy's sister
Nell;
Am I bold to say this happened in the land where
angels dwell:—
That the children met in heaven, after all their
earthly woes,
And that Nelly kissed her brother, and said, "Billy,
here's your rose"?

ORINSKA.

FROM northern lands the singer came.
I bade him strike his harp and try
The story that I knew by name,
Yet none may sing lest traitors spy—
For in that minstrel's native clime
The words are treason black as night.
Thus ran his song, in rugged rhyme,
With simple words and moral trite.

"I may not mention time or place,
I may not breathe my hero's name,
Lest one of his proud, haughty race
Should blush to find the story fame.
I would not sting the living cheek
To honour now the noble dead.
Let God above His vengeance wreak
If aught shall bow the guilty head.

"O'er mighty hordes his father reigned,
And he stood nearest to the throne,
And all his people's love he gained;
Throughout the land his worth was known.
His speech was soft, and through his eyes
There shone a light serene and clear,
Good Nature's beacon, to apprise
The tempest-tost 'There's safety here.'

"Before the world he wore his rank
With majesty and regal mien;
But far from men, he lowly sank,
And hid his head his hands between,
And cried, 'Oh, peasant in your cot!
Oh, weary hands that dig and toil,
I envy you your glorious lot,
Rough children of the grateful soil.'

"Harsh fetters were his princely chains,
They caged the noble heart that beat
To share his people's joys and pains
And walk the world with careless feet;
To fling the mask of state aside,
And be God's noble work—*a man!*
Hemmed in and barred by pomp and pride,
He pined the stream of fate to span.

"For in his visions came two stars,
That shone and made his way seem fair;
They gleamed between his prison bars,
And bade him seek the outer air.
And those twin lights were maiden eyes,
Two sparks that set his soul astir.
A crown was his—a certain prize;
But he would give the world for her!

"For her, a peasant, lowly born,
A fair-faced, laughing, saucy girl,
Whom high-bred youth should shun or scorn—
The daughter of an unfreed churl.
'Orinska,' in his dreams he moaned,
'I'd rather share a hut with thee
Than reign a despot high enthroned!
What cruel fate made prince of me?'

"And so at last there came a day
When, flinging rank and name aside,
He sought the village far away,
And wooed and won a peasant bride.
Nor dreamed she of his high estate,
But thought it equal with her own,
And took him for her lawful mate
When faith had ripened—love had grown.

"Missed from his father's court by few,
He travelled, so the gossip ran;
Yet where he dwelt the monarch knew,
And sent his spies the place to scan.
They brought him word; their crafty hands
The skein untangled and unwound,
And showed the heir to mighty lands
In humble wedlock tied and bound.

"The sire's fierce eyebrows met in rage,
And o'er his face black shadows passed;
A solemn oath he did engage
That day the doves should coo their last.
His kingly blood ran chill to think
The issue of his loins should e'er
Look downward to the mud, and link
With beings bred and nurtured there.

"That eve a secret band set out
To seize and bring the recreant son—
The vile, debased, unprincely lout—
Who outrage on his rank had done.
They tore him, in the dead of night,
From pale Orinska's wild embrace;
And ere the dawning day was light
The sire and son stood face to face.

"'What devil, boy,' the monarch cried,
'Hath urged thee to this deed of shame?
To herd with peasants—seek a bride
From vermin all too foul to name?
'Tis treason, knave, against my throne;
Dishonour to your princely grade;
But bitterly shall both atone—
The shameless son, the wanton jade!'

"'Sire,' quoth the son, and bowed his head,
'I am a peasant, and no prince;
My brother is your heir instead;
I 've shed the rank, nor craved it since.
A peasant, with a peasant wife,
I 'll pass my days in healthy toil,
Rear hardy children to the life
And claim my guerdon from the soil.'

"Poor fool, to think such joys can be!—
He knew not how Orinska lay
Stabbed to the heart—her murderers free,
Since but the monarch's tools were they.
He knew at last, yet shed no tear,
But cried, 'Oh, curse of kingly sway!
E'en that he holds in life most dear
A prince's love can only slay!

"'My kiss was but the fierce, hot blast,
That scorched the rose and left it dead;
O sin, that e'er mine eyes were cast
To where it blossomed pure and red!
Had I but wooed my love in sport,
Or damned her soul to please a whim,
I had not sinned against his court
Or put this bloody deed on him.

"'Farewell, O world! I cannot purge
The princely poison in my veins,
Yet from the grave we all emerge
To where one level rank remains.
There prince and peasant shall be one,
And there my dearest love doth wait.'
That night a daring deed was done,
And Cæsar wept his first-born's fate."

* * * *

The singer ceased. I will not say
If I believe his story true;
And yet, I think, perchance they may
Who search the page of hist'ry through.
There have been kings whose lives were sad,
Who, all unwilling, played the part;
Since, like Orinska's lord, they had,
O fatal gift—a human heart!



DURING HER MAJESTY'S PLEASURE.

WHO says I'm mad? The coward knaves
Who thought to save my woman's neck?
The murdered lie within their graves,
But sane I wrought the bloody wreck.
Hath not a mother right to shield
Her children from the yawning hell?
In mercy God the truth revealed,
And claimed the lives I loved too well.

Whence come you, man, to question me?
If that you be by Justice sent
To say that now my end shall be,
Because my judges' hearts relent,
I'll prove to you that I am sane;
Since life is torture, let me die;
For outraged laws I would be slain;
My children call me from on high.

He kissed my lips, and called me fair,
  His fierce false eyes shone into mine;
The man-fiend lured me to his lair,
  And I was drunk with love as wine.
Our hands were bound in Holy Church,
  We had God's altar and a priest:
God gave a man my soul to smirch,
  Man gave my body to a beast.

You think a woman mad who speaks
  A language foul on woman's lips,
Where man, her master, simply seeks
  For words of love in honeyed drips.
What godhead do you claim, O men,
  To make our being serve your joys,
In prisoned space our lives to pen?
  Are women but your sawdust toys?

I ask your pardon, stranger knight,
  Who sought the captive in her gaol;
Believe you have not heard aright,
  My lips shall frame a smoother tale:
I yield to fate—I rave no more—
  I was the fool all women are;
No higher did my spirit soar
  Than just to make a man its star.

A man! Oh, I could tear this face
Until the hot blood gushed and welled,
My life's damnation was its grace
Which first his eyes to mine impelled.
Must I be mad because I shriek
And moan beneath the lash of fate?
Or cry the heavens on him to wreak
The vengeance of my deathless hate?

For, look! these hands that wear his ring
Are red with blood that left his veins,
My dead babes' souls to stain and sting,
And work its evil in their brains.
When year by year he viler grew,
And his foul nature came to light,
I prayed God take them ere I knew
Their bud and blossom hid the blight.

He robbed me. Oh, the vilest thief
Who robs a child that trips to school
Might hail my craven lord as chief,
For I was but a baby fool—
A woman weak—a trusting wife;
He stole my youth and health and faith,
Shut out the light from all my life,
And left me but love's moaning wraith.

My husband! Faugh! my lips are flame,
And burn and blacken as they link
A word so holy with the shame
Of him who brought me to the brink,—
Who took me, heart and soul and flesh,
To lead me to the gulf and cry,
"To get thee from my lawful mesh
There only doth the roadway lie."

A parting blow—a parting oath—
A devil's face—a fierce farewell;
He left the children—left them both—
To share on earth their mother's hell;
To toil and starve—the shameless hound!—
To die for any help but mine;
For we were penniless, I found,
And then I prayed for help divine.

And in the night God came to me,
And showed me, in a ghastly dream,
How, if they lived, my boys would be
Attainted from the parent stream;
That through their veins his poison ran,
And in their souls his nature slept.
I said, "The seed shall not be man,"
Yet all that day I only wept.

But when the night was come they lay
  In gentle slumber side by side,
And then God nerved my hand to stay
  The rushing of life's crimson tide.
So swift I their salvation wrought,
  The smile of sleep still kept its place—
Only a holier look death brought
  To light each placid baby face.

So they were saved from Satan's grasp,
  And God has got them safe and whole,
No woman now they e'er can clasp
  With demon hands and sear her soul.
And that I did this noble deed,
  And slew the father in the sons,
My earthly judges take no heed,
  But each who hears me shrinks and shuns.

They hold me here to drive me mad,
  To wreak *his* vengeance. Ay, I know—
Hark to the wailing low and sad;
  My children call me—let me go!
O man, in mercy burst these chains,
  Give me my death as act of love:
Life mocks a mother's deathless pains
  Whose babies wait with God above.

TWO WOMEN.

TO-NIGHT is a midnight meeting, and the
Earl is in the chair;
There 's food and a little sermon for all
who enter there,
For all of our erring sisters who, finding their trade
is slack,
Have time to sit down and listen to the holy men
in black.

To-night is a midnight meeting, and in from the
filthy street
They are bringing the wretched wantons who sin
for a crust to eat;
There 's cake to be had, and coffee, as well as the
brimstone tracts
That paint in such flaming colours the end of their
evil acts.

There's cake to be had, and coffee, and a seat, and warmth and light,
And shelter, for just a little, from the pitiless lash of night;
And as for the scolding sermon—though it comes through the preacher's nose—
There 's a bit of it, now and then, too, that tells on the ghastly rows.

There are streaks on the ruddled faces when a long-lost chord is struck;
For women are quick to whimper when they 're ill and are out of luck.
Some picture of early childhood—of the innocent long ago,
Is raised by an artful preacher, and the tears begin to flow.

It is only a trick of the platform, a trick that they always try,
For they reckon it half the battle if the women are made to cry;
They soften them down and smooth them, and then when they 're ripe for seed,
They paint them an awful picture of the end of the life they lead.

To-night is a midnight meeting, and out of the rain
and dirt
There creeps in a sinful woman—drenched is her
draggled skirt,
Drenched are the gaudy feathers that droop in her
shapeless hat,
And her hair hangs over her shoulders in a wet,
untidy mat.

She hears of the fiery furnace that waits for the
wicked dead;
Of the torture in store for the outcast who sins for
her daily bread;
She hears that a God of mercy has built, on a sunlit
shore,
A haven of rest eternal for those who shall sin no
more.

Anon by the silent waters she kneels, with her eyes
upcast,
And whispers her Heavenly Father, "O God, I
have sinned my last.
Here, in this cruel city, to live I must sin the
sin;
Save me from that, O Father!—pity, and take
me in."

A plunge in the muddy river, a cry on the chill night air,
And the waters upon their bosom a pilgrim sister bear;
She has laved the stain of the city from her soul in the river slime,
She has sought for the promised haven through the door of a deadly crime.

* * * *

To-night is a midnight meeting—a ball in a Western square—
And rank and fashion and beauty, and a Prince of the blood are there;
In the light of a thousand tapers the jewelled bosoms gleam,
And the cheeks of the men are flushing, and the eyes of the women beam.

Round in the sensuous galop the high-born maids are swung,
Clasped in the arms of *roues* whose vice is on ev'ry tongue;
And the stately Norman mothers look on the scene with pride
If the *roue* is only wealthy and in search of a youthful bride.

But fair above all the women is the beautiful
Countess May,
And wealthy and great and titled yield to her
queenly sway;
Her they delight to honour, her they are proud
to know,
For wherever the Countess visits, a Prince of the
blood will go.

The story is common gossip; there isn't a noble
dame
That bows to the reigning beauty but knows of
her evil fame.
She is married—had sons and daughters when she
humoured a Prince's whim;
But her husband is proud of her conquest—the
Prince is a friend to *him*.

The bishop who christens her babies, the coachman
who drives her pair,
The maid who carries her letters, the footman
behind her chair,
The Marquis, her white-haired father, her brothers,
so gossips say—
All know of the guilty passion of the Prince and
the Countess May.

The doors of the Court are open, and the great Lord Chamberlain bows,
Though he knows that the titled wanton has broken her marriage vows;
And all of the courtiers flatter, and strive for a friendly glance—
On her whom the Prince delights in who dares to look askance?

She is crowned with the world's fresh roses; no tongue has a word of blame;
But the woman who falls from hunger is a thing too foul to name.
She is blessed who barters her honour just for a prince's smile;
The vice of the Court is *charming,* and the vice of the alley *vile.*

So, world, shall it be for ever—this hunting the street girl down,
While you honour the titled Phryne, and hold her in high renown;
But when, at the great uprising, they meet for the Judgment Day,
I 'd rather be that drowned harlot than the beautiful Countess May.

THE LAST LETTER.

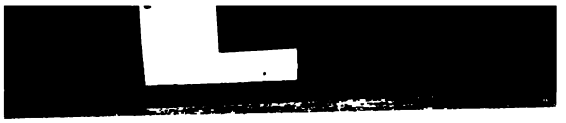
JACK, old pal, is it you over there?
I 've been dozin', old fellow, I think;
How long have ye been in that chair?
Stay ye here, lad, and hand us a drink.
That 's the stuff in the jug on the tray.
Am I better? No, Jack, that I ain't,
Nor I never shall be, so they say.
Where 's the drink? give it here, lad—I 'm faint!

Dang it all, Jack, it 's hard when it comes,
This 'ere Death, as we laughs at and jeers;
And I don't mind confessin', 'twixt chums,
As this last touch has give me the skeers.
I 'm a-dying, I tell ye—don't speak!
Don't pertend as ye thinks as I 'm not.
I know what 's a-keepin' me weak,
And I know it 's the fever I 've got.

I heerd 'em, old chap, what they sed
When they come in the shanty jes' now;
I turned to the wall, hid my 'ed,
And pretended to snore like a sow.
So they thought I was sleepin', ye know,
And they sed as I 'd copped it o' Jim;—
Well, it come like a bit of a blow,
For I watched by the deathbed o' him.

Now I reckons my race is nigh run,
And I ain't but a few days to live.
Well, as parson says, "*Thy* will be done!"
And I adds that there bit 'bout "Forgive."
I 'm a bad 'un, old chap, certain sure,
Like the rest of the coves here I 've bin,
For the atmosphere ain't over pure—
At the diggin's it 's easy to sin.

I ain't not a coward to whine,
Not 'cos I 'm like for to die,
But I wants that there "mercy Divine"
As they talks of, old chap—you know why.
For it 's hard, Jack, to be as I be,
Lyin' here at the end o' my life,
While them thousands o' miles o' the sea
Is a-roarin' 'twixt husband and wife.



If the wicked man's portion is flame,
I suppose that 's the thing I deserve;
But I don't like to think o' that same,
For I 'm weak, and I ain't got the nerve.
Oh! it 's hard that 'twixt me and my love
After death the black waters will flow;
For she 'll go to them angels above,
While I 'm sent to the devil below.

Save me, Lord! Let me see her once more
For a minute—the time for a kiss;
Jest a second with her on that shore,
When she comes to her throne and her bliss.
She will ask you that blessin' as well;
She 's deservin' o' heaven, but still,
You might jest as soon put her in hell
As to not let her speak to her Bill.

Jack, I rave, and my head seems to swim,
Then I comes to my senses again.
Now, that 's jest how the fever took Jim;
Sit 'e here, lad, a bit while I 'm sane.
Be it wicked to think, as may be,
A woman like her—like my own—
Would be rather in torture with me
Than a-sittin' in heaven alone?

Jack, old pal, do ye know as I feels
I can see her out yonder to-day;
I can see the old room, and she kneels
And she prays for her Bill far away.
When the bairns see the tears on her cheek,
Then they know as she's thinkin' o' dad;
Here 's her letter as reached me last week,
Jest afore I was taken so bad.

I ain't answered that letter not yet,
I 'm too weak and too weary to write;
It 's the last one as ever I 'll get—
Put it there, lad, to gladden my sight.
Put it there, where my eyes, gettin' dim,
Will behold it right up to the end;
When I 'm dead say, "It 's buried wi' him,
And it lies on his heart like a friend."

I remember that day as we sailed,
You and me, for these wonderful fields,
Where the di'monds and gold never failed:
Lord! it 's fevers and agues they yields.
Work was scarce over there, times was slack;—
Over here there was fortunes to make;
In a couple of years we 'd go back,
And now—well, 'twas done for her sake.

'Twon't be long now, I guess, 'fore I go—
Jim was dead in a couple of days—
You go mad at the finish, I know,
And you struggles and shouts in a craze.
While I can, Jack, I 've something to say;
Savin' you here I ain't got a pal;
I must answer that letter to-day,
And I wants you to write to my gal.

On yon table 's the pen and the ink;
Now write just the words as I speak,—
"My dear Bess, I 'm not well, but I think
It 's the weather as makes me so weak;
Me and Jack is quite happy out here,
And we hope soon to hit on a spot
As 'll turn us some coin in, my dear—
And the weather 's been awfully hot.

"I can't send no money just yet,
But I 'll bring plenty back by-and-by—
And that 'ere won't be long—don't 'e fret."
Jack, I hope God 'll pardon the lie;
I don't want the last words I write
To be hintin' o' death, and be sad;
I want, when I 'm thinkin' to-night,
To know as she 'll read, and be glad.

"God bless you, my darlin'! keep heart;
Give the bairns a good cuddle for me;
Jack 's a-writin' this here 'cos he 's smart,
And the mail's gettin' ready for sea.
I can't write myself, 'cos my hand
Isn't well what I hurt with the spade;
Jack and I has a scheme what we 've planned,
When we 're home and our fortins is made.

"I can pictur' the day when we meet;
I can fancy your head on my breast,
And your eyes look in mine—oh, so sweet!—
And our bairns is all snug in the nest."
Jack, old man, write it quick, for I 'm queer,
And there 's mists comin' over my sight;
"God bless you and keep you, my dear!
I 'm your own lovin' Bill—and good-night."

She 'll read it, the bairns on her knee,
When I 'm cold evermore in the grave;
And she 'll strain them fond eyes to the sea
For a bark as will ne'er skim the wave.
Oh, it 's hard to be dyin' like this,
When she reads—will she dream o' the scene?
Jack, just give me that letter to kiss;
She will touch where the kisses has been.

Jack, old man, will ye give us a prayer?
P'r'aps it may be as God 'ull forgive;
Let me meet my poor Bessie up there
When I 'm dead, as I can't while I live.
For it 's hard on the wench as my sins
Should divorce us in heaven as well.
I 've heard as it 's pray'r pardon wins:
Prop me up while I pray for a spell.

When I 'm dead, just you write her again,
Say I 'd faith when I wrote to her last;
That I couldn't send sorrow and pain,
Or a message her hopes for to blast.
Say I wasn't alone when I went,
That you had my hand tight in yer grip;
Say you caught my last breath as ye leant,
And that "Bess" was the word on my lip.

POLLY.

IT'S poems he 's readin', that boy there;
he reads by the hour and cries;
A silly young oaf to be fillin' his head
with a parcel o' lies.
What ha' poor folks to do with that humbug?—it 's
all very well for the rich
To go frettin' theirselves about wictims and fairies,
and corpses and sich;
Or to go off their nuts about ladies as dies for
young fellers as fights,
And them Byrons, and Manfreds, and Hamlets
what has ghostes to talk to o' nights.
He reads out aloud, and I hears him a-talkin' the
awfullest trash
About earls as goes mad in their castles, and
females what settles their hash.

Potry! I'd burn it, I would, sir—it's that what
makes young fellows drink,
And a-leave off a-partin' their hair straight and a-
washin' theirselves at the sink.
He must work for his livin', that boy must. Will
wisions put clo's on his limbs?
Will Byron or Tennerson feed him, or old Mr.
What's-his-name's hymns?
There ain't not no potry in green stuff—in 'taturs
and inguns and peas,
And a-workin' from dorn till it's midnight to earn
just yer beer, bread, and cheese.
Yes, I'm pretty well off, Mister, I am; but I've
worked like a black all my days,
And I means as my boy shall do likewise, to keep
him from wagabone ways.

There, he's off! the young warmint, he's needled;
whenever I talks about work
He puts on his cap and he hooks it; he's a notion
he'll go for a clerk.
The green-stuff ain't up to his 'ighness; he don't
like to serve at the stall;
He fancies hisself in a orfice, a-fillin' o' books with
his scrawl.
It's the School Board what gives 'em these notions,
a-stuffin' boys' heads full of pride,

And makes 'em look down on their fathers—these
School Boards I ne'er could abide.
When I was his age I was workin', a-wheelin' the
barrer for dad,
And a-fetchin' the stuff from the markets, when
hosses was not to be had.

Lame! What, ye noticed it, did yer? Well, yes,
he goes lame on his pins,
And that's just why I stomachs his tantrums and
forgives the young beggar his sins;
For he ain't not a bad boy at bottom—and he 'll
carry that limp to his grave—
He 'd a squeak for his life when that happened—
escaped by the narrowest shave.
That was eight years ago—how time passes! I was
only a-costerin' then,
Not a greengrocer like I be now, sir, with a shop
and a couple o' men,
It was all through yon mare in the stables, the mare
as ye saw in the yard.
As fat as Sir Roger, sir, warn't she? We don't
make her work very hard.
That was Polly, that mare was—our Polly—'Lor'
bless ye, it 's just like a tale;
Eight years ago she was done for, her strength was
beginning to fail.

She'd been run off her legs in the barrer, a-gallopin' mornin' and night,
And the winter was heavy and frosty, and settled poor Polly outright;
So my mates what had flyers they passed me, and left me behind on the road;
And often she'd tremble and stagger, and make quite a fuss at a load.
She'd worked like a good 'un, had Polly, and paid me agen and agen;
But I thought as the critter was done for, and sold her to one of the men.

I got a few poun' from a coper, who bought her and faked her a bit,
And sold her agen at a profit to a feller named Whitechapel Kit.
Such a brute!—but that's just by the way, sir. As soon as I'd scraped up the cash,
I bought a new hoss with the money,—I wanted to be a bit flash.
I bid for a beautiful stepper, as carried his 'ed in the air,
One as looked like the horty young hosses what noblemen drives in a pair,
I got him dirt cheap for a pony, and I reckon I felt a bit proud

When I put down the ready and took him and led
him away through the crowd.

'Twas a Saturday night as I bought him, this fine,
strappin', flea-bitten grey;
So on Sunday I drove him to Hendon, the missis
and kid in the shay.
He went like the wind; such a pictur'; the coves
as had chaffed me before,
Their hi's was a-startin' with envy; by the whole
blessed bilin' we tore.
And I set there as proud as a peacock, a-holdin'
the reins like a toff,
And a-puffin' a great big Maniller, as set my old gal
on the cough.
And up by the Harp we met Polly, a-drorin' six
coves in a cart,
And that Kit was a-beatin' 'is 'ardest; it give me a
pain in my heart.

I passed the poor critter a-panting, and hearing
Kit's curses and blows,
It made me feel mad with myself, like, and I hit my
hoss over the nose.
I was flickin' the whip in my anger—not meanin' to
hit 'im at all—
But the brute gave a leap and then bolted, dashed
forward, and ran at a wall.

It was done in a moment, and over; I fainted, and when we was found
We was all of a heap there a-bleedin', and the grey was quite still on the ground.
His hind leg was broke; I was injured; the wheel had gone over my wife,
And the boy as you saw here a-readin'—well, the fall, sir, had lamed him for life.

But the worst of it all was the grey, sir—when a coster he loses a hoss,
It's precious nigh ruin, I reckon—there's few as gets over the loss.
For his savins is gone in a minit, his food and his clothes and his rent.
'Twas the hoss as my pals went to first, sir,—they knew what the accident meant;
And while we was sittin' there moaning, poor Polly comes toiling along,
With that Kit still a-thrashing her brutal, with a stick and a great leather thong;
And she turned her poor head so, I fancied, and I seed such a look in her eye,
I'll swear as she knew what had happened, for she give quite a queer little cry.

It was ruin that night in our kitching as sat in the chair by my side;

The boy was up stairs there a-groanin', the missis had like to 'a' died;
Thirty poun' had gone smash in a minit—we'd borrowed a portion o' that—
Now I hadn't a hoss for my bus'ness, and I didn't know what to be at.
Then I thought about Polly, and sorrowed to think as I'd let the mare go;
She'd 'a' worked with a rest for a long time; she was sure, if she was a bit slow,
And just as I sat there a-thinkin'—a-cussin', and breakin' my heart,
There was something came bump on the doorstep, and there was a hoss and a cart.

It was Polly!—I see her a-standing, and thought as she'd come from the skies,
And she rubbed her old nose on my coat-sleeve, and I stuck like a log with surprise;
Then she walked herself off to the stable, and give me to know, sir, outright
As she'd thank me to take off the harness and make up her bed for the night.
And she's been my right hand to this day, sir, and things 'as gone well with me, too,
And I've turned up the street and the barrer, and now I'm a man well to do.

Didn't Kit come to claim her? Why, no, sir—and
that 's just the best of the tale:
He was collared for something at Hendon, and
walked off that minit to gaol.

It seems he was nought but a bad 'un; he 'd been
cracking a crib, so they say,
And the peelers was put on his traces, and they
copped him at Hendon that day.
They copped him inside a-refreshing, and took him
away there and then,
And Polly she stood there a-waiting, but they 'd
bolted away had the men.
She waited, and, nobody coming, she just took it
into her head
To trot off in search of her supper and make for
her old master's shed.
So from that day to this one I 've kept her, and Kit
ain't been seen any more,
And I date all the blessins I 've had, sir, from the
night as she come to my door.

Past work is old Polly, God bless her! but while
I 've a roof and a brown
There 's a meal for the mare as has served me, and
a bed for my lass to lay down.

I felt when that grey chucked us over as Providence meant it, maybe,
As a smack for a-sellin' a critter as had given her best days to me.
Ah!! here comes my Tommy a-limpin'—now, Tommy, don't pick up that book,
You'll never have nowt in your headpiece till poems has taken their hook.
What!—get along with you, Mister—I ain't told no poems to you,
That tale about Polly ain't potry—it can't be, ye see, *for it 's true!*

AN OLD FOOL.

(A FASHIONABLE CONVERSATION.)

"DEAR me!" cried the Duchess; "Ha, ha!" laughed the Earl,
While the Marchioness turned up her delicate nose
('Twas an aquiline feature not easy to curl),
And the rest of the guests gave a chorus of "Oh's!"

"So he's taken her back! What a fool!" cried the Duke;
"A man of his wealth, and position, and years.
Did he kiss her and thank her, or mildly rebuke?
What weapons were hers—were they tantrums or tears?"

"It 's a deuced queer story," drawled Egerton Grey,
"I heard it of Carholme last night, at the club.
It's a fortnight at least since the pair ran away,
And he 's taken her back, like a dutiful hub."

The Marchioness giggled, the Earl laughed aloud,
And the Duchess declared it was terrible taste.
Then hushing the taunts of the frivolous crowd,
To tell the whole story a comrade made haste.

For the hero is dear to his brother in arms,
By whose side he has fought, by whose side he has bled;
In the mouth of this soldier the story has charms,
And Malice sits silent and holds down its head.

"Come, listen, you people who scoff and who jeer
At a deed that an angel might claim as its own;
Let your laughter give way to a blush when you hear
Why Sir George gave this woman one chance to atone.

"When at Alma his colonel fell, shot through the breast,
This man took an oath as he knelt by his side.
'Guard my girl!' cried the colonel,—his hand Sir George prest,
And it 's five years ago since that girl was his bride.

"He worshipped, he loved her, kept silence and prayed,
He prayed that one day she might give him her heart.
He was old, she was young, and a gay little maid,
And she called him her father. He acted the part.

"Yet, as love has no rules for the young or the old,
He played badly, broke down, and she guessed at the truth;
He 'd a title to heighten the gleam of his gold—
He gave her his riches; she gave him her youth.

"Did she love him? Who knows? Maybe, yes, for a time,
Then this scamp came about her; she listened and fled;
All the world was agog with the news of her crime,
But her husband remembered his oath to the dead.

"I 'm a soldier, accustomed to barrack and camp,
And I can't put this case in the way that I ought,
And my words are too coarse for a deed of its stamp—
For an action diviner no man ever wrought!

" He went, did her husband, the man that you flout,
He followed the lovers and caught them in Spain;
Met the cur, this young lord, and would not call him out;
Brought his wife back and gave her his honour again.

" 'I swore to your father to guard you through life,'
Thus he spoke to the fool, looking straight in her eyes.
'I forgive you, and guard you—you still are my wife;
Not a thing for the thoughtless to jeer and despise.

" 'For your error 'tis I who am chiefly to blame,
I forgot the old saying—December and May.
I atone for the wrong, and I shield you from shame;
Be patient, and wait till God calls me away.'

" So he took her and kissed her, and now the world sneers
At a man whose brave deed should be written in gold,
And whose feet should be washed with a Magdalen's tears,
As the Saviour's were washed in the story of old.

"When you kneel at the throne of God's mercy above,
And you pray that your sin-begrimed soul He will lave,
Will you mock at this story of infinite love
And call him a fool who the sinful would save?"

"Dear me!" said the Duchess; "Ha, ha!" laughed the Earl,
"Comparing Sir George to—'pon honour, that's cool!"
The Duke gave his whiskers a fanciful twirl,
And murmured, "Forgive her!—the silly old fool!"

KATE MALONEY.

IN the winter, when the snowdrift stood
against the cabin door,
Kate Maloney, wife of Patrick, lay nigh
dying on the floor—
Lay on rags and tattered garments, moaning out
with feeble breath,
"Knale beside me, Pat, my darlint; pray the Lord
to give me death."

Patrick knelt him down beside her, took her thin
and wasted hand,
Saying something to her softly that she scarce could
understand.
"Let me save ye, O my honey! Only spake a
single word,
And I 'll sell the goolden secret where it 's wanted
to be heard.

"Sure it cuts my heart to see ye lyin' dyin' day by day,
When it's food and warmth ye're wanting just to dhrive yer pains away.
There's a hundred goolden guineas at my mercy if ye will—
Do ye know that Mickey Regan's in the hut upon the hill?"

Kate Maloney gripped her husband, then she looked him through and through;
"Pat Maloney, am I dhraming? Did I hear them words o' you?
Have I lived an honest woman, lovin' Ireland, God, and thee,
That now upon my deathbed ye should spake them words to me?

"Come ye here, ye tremblin' traitor; stand beside me now, and swear
By yer soul and yer hereafther, while he lives ye will not dare
Whisper e'en a single letter o' brave Mickey Regan's name.
Can't I die o' cold and hunger? Would ye have me die o' shame?

"Let the Saxon bloodhounds hunt him, let them show their filthy gold;
What 's the poor boy done to hurt 'em? Killed a rascal rich and old—
Shot an English thief who robbed us, grinding Irish peasants down,
Raisin' rints to pay his wantons and his lackeys up in town.

"We are beasts, we Irish peasants, whom these Saxon tyrants spurn;
If ye hunt a beast too closely, and ye wound him, won't he turn?
Wasn't Regan's sister ruined by the blackguard lying dead,
Who was paid his rint last Monday, not in silver, but in lead?"

Pat Maloney stood and listened, then he knelt and kissed his wife;
"Kiss me, darlint, and forgive me, sure I thought to save yer life;
And it 's hard to see ye dyin' when the gold 's within my reach.
I 'll be lonely when ye 're gone, dear,"—here a whimper stopped his speech.

* * * *



Late that night, when Kate was dozing, Pat crept cautiously away
From his cabin to the hovel where the hunted Regan lay;
He was there—he heard him breathing; something whispered to him, "Go!
Go and claim the hundred guineas—Kate will never need to know."

He would plan some little story when he brought her food to eat;
He would say the priest had met him, and had sent her wine and meat.
No one passed their lonely cabin; Kate would lie and fancy still
Mick had slipped away in secret from the hut upon the hill.

Kate Maloney woke and missed him; guessed his errand there and then;
Raised her feeble voice and cursed him with the curse of God and men.
From her rags she slowly staggered, took her husband's loaded gun,
Crying, "God, I pray Thee, help me, ere the traitor's deed be done!"

All her limbs were weak with fever, as she crawled
across the floor;
But she writhed and struggled bravely till she
reached the cabin door,
Thence she scanned the open country, for the moon
was in its prime,
And she saw her husband running, and she thought,
"There yet is time."

He had come from Regan's hiding, past the door,
and now he went
By the pathway down the mountain, on his evil
errand bent.
Once she called him, but he stopped not, neither
gave he glance behind,
For her voice was weak and feeble, and it melted
on the wind.

Then a sudden strength came to her, and she rose
and followed fast,
Though her naked limbs were frozen by the bitter
winter blast;
She had reached him very nearly when her new-
born spirit fled.
"God has willed it!" cried the woman, *then she
shot the traitor dead.*

From her bloodless lips, half frozen, rose a whisper
to the sky,
"I have saved his soul from treason; here, O
Heaven, let me die.
Now no babe unborn shall curse him, nor his
country loathe his name;
I have saved ye, O my husband, from a deed of
deathless shame."

No one yet has guessed their story; Mickey Regan
got away,
And across the kind Atlantic lives an honest man
to-day;
While in Galway still the peasants show the lonely
mountain side
Where an Irishman was murdered and an Irish-
woman died.



A FELLOW-FEELING.

"WON'T we drown the new-born puppies?"
Would you have me drown the lot—
All the pretty little babies
That our faithful Nellie's got?
Steady, steady, Master Johnny,
Sit you down and leave your play;
I've a story I must tell you
Ere we take those pups away.

Don't you know, my merry Johnny,
That you're father's darling boy—
In a world of work and trouble
Just his one and only joy?
Yet you'd sisters once, and brothers;
Laddie, look into my eyes
With that look that was your mother's—
Don't you see that daddy cries?

Come you closer to me, Johnny,
Come and sit upon my knee.
It is time you knew how Heaven
Took my little ones from me.
Hear it now, and in your bosom
Keep it treasured, boy, for aye—
Keep it there a sacred sorrow
To remember night and day.

I had seven little darlings,
Seven pretty boys and girls;
They had all your laughing dimples,
They had all your flaxen curls.
I had seven—five has Nellie,
And you 'd drown them every one;
Kiss me, boy, and hear the reason
Why I wouldn't have it done.

You have seen the little playthings
Stowed away in yonder room;
Ah, the little hands that held them
All lie folded in the tomb.
You have seen the pretty lady
In the picture by your bed—
That 's your mother, little Johnny,
"Darling mamma," who is dead.

Kiss me, boy, and clasp me tighter,
  Fling your arms about my neck,
While I tell you all the horror
  Of that cruel, cruel wreck.
In the pit-hole they are sleeping,
  Mother, sisters, brothers too;
We were nine until it happened,
  Now there's only me and you.

We were sailing up the river
  On an autumn afternoon,
And you romped about beside us
  To the music's merry tune.
"Little darlings!" said your mother,
  As your joyous shouts rang clear,
Then there came a sudden terror
  And a thousand cries of fear.

I will tell you when you 're older
  All about that fearful night,
All the horrors of the moment
  Burnt for ever on my sight.
In a second we were scattered,
  Father, children—husband, wife;
In my arms I clasped you tightly,
  And ran forward for my life.



I could see the angry waters
  Whirling upward for their prey,
I could see my bonny darlings
  Trampled down and swept away.
So I clasped you close and shouted,
  Called your mother by her name,
Then I held my breath and listened,
  But her answer never came.

Swift the waters closed above us,
  Then we rose and kept afloat,
And I knew no more till someone
  Seized and dragged us to a boat.
All my children God has taken;
  Of the laughing bonny crew,
From that scene of cruel slaughter,
  He had left me only you.

It was weeks, my boy, ere reason
  Came again and let me think;
Once I raved in my mad anguish,
  Wishing God had let me sink.
But in time the veil was lifted,
  And the unwept tears could flow:
Then they brought me you, my darling,
  And you broke the bitter blow.

Now I want you, little Johnny,
  Just to think of what I 've said,
And to pray God's blessing nightly
  On our darlings who are dead.
Kneel beneath your mother's picture,
  Lifting up your gentle eyes,
And remember she is watching
  From her mansion in the skies,

She can see us, and her babies
  Are around her up above,
And she has them always with her,
  While I 've only you to love.
But I think at times they 're with us—
  That they creep in unawares;
I can see their smiling faces
  In the row of empty chairs.

Kiss me, Johnny, kiss poor daddy,
  Wipe away his foolish tears;
You and I will live together
  Through the long and happy years.
No; we won't drown Nellie's puppies,
  We, at least, that deed may shun;
Now you know, my pretty Johnny,
  Why I wouldn't have it done.

MOLL JARVIS O' MORLEY.

A CONSTABLE'S TALE.

QUEER cattle is women to deal with? Lord bless ye, yer honour, they are!
I'd sooner be faced by ten navvies than tackle a woman, by far;
'Tain't only they bites and they scratches, and you mustn't not give it 'em back,
But their minds is so awful perwerted—they're such an obstropolous pack!

I can hunt down a burglar and nab him, and tackle the roughest o' rough,
But when it's a female I'm after I feels like a regular muff;
For I understands men and their natures, and I knows all their fly little lays,
But there isn't a orficer breathin' as is up to all *feminine* ways.

They be such a darned mixture o' feelin's—they love and they hate in a breath,
They 'll be false to one cove in five minits, and they 'll stick to another till death.
They're the blessedest big contrydiction as ever creation has seen,
For they 've got such grand notions of honour, and yet they 're so deucedly mean.

For a moment they 'll tremble and shiver, and shriek if a spider comes near,
And the next they 'll look death in the face, sir, with never a quiver o' fear;
As to minds, they ain't got none, I reckon—it 's heart as prompts all as they do.
Have I seen some rum things with these women? Yes, I fancy I have—one or two.

Case in point? Half a score, if you 're willin'—say one—Well, I 'm blowed! look 'ee there,
See that woman a-turning the corner—that queer-looking wench with the hair?
Case in point! Why, she 'll do for a good 'un. She 's as mad as a hatter, sir, now;
For a man she went out of her senses, and it 's worth yer a-hearin' tell how.

That wench there's Moll Jarvis o' Morley, the place
t'other side o' the wood—
Ev'ry man in the force here knows Molly—there's
pretty good reasons he should—
For the privates and sergeants and 'spectors, she
flummoxed 'em all to a coon,
And she left us like open-mouthed dummies
a-waggin' our heads at the moon.

'Twas in this way it happened: Her husband, a
horrible brute of a chap,
Was arrested for smashin' her skull in, and half
killing the babe in her lap.
He was tried, and her evidence taken; she softened
it down where she could;
But the women as seed him set on her, they told
how the real matter stood.

"Fifteen years," says the judge; then she fainted,
and Tom he growls out, with an oath,
"Have a care for yourself and the brat, Moll; when
I'm free I'll just finish you both."
Then she knelt and she prayed to the judges to hear
what she'd gotten to say—
"Her Tom was mad drunk when he done it, and
he'd never been harsh till that day."

'Twas a lie; bless your soul, why he'd whacked her
and kicked her night, morning, and noon;
You 'd 'a' thought as she 'd dance at the sentence,
and think it a merciful boon.
'Twas a squeak for her life as he'd gave her, her
head was all strapped in the box,
And she trembled and shook as Tom eyed her—he
eyed her that day like a fox.

Lor, but women's rum cattle to deal with, the first
man found that to his cost,
And I reckon it's just through a woman the last man
on earth 'll be lost.
But that ain't my moral at present, I just wants to
prove to yer face
That we pleecemen ain't nothing to go by when a
woman gets into the case.

Just a month after Tom got his sentence, the news
come he 'd 'scaped from the gaol,
And the whole of us all round the county was
ordered to hunt on his trail.
She heard it, and went on her knees, sir, and prayed
as he 'd get clean away,
And in less than a week we 'd a notion we held
Master Thomas at bay.

He was there, in them woods over yonder. Them
woods is uncommonly thick,
And a man might be hidden a twelvemonth if he 'd
live on rank grass and a stick.
"Starve him out," says our chief; "draw a *cordon*
of officers right round the place.
Let him choose 'twixt starvation and capture; one
or other the beggar must face."

"They 're a-starvin' him out," says a gossip; and
Molly she heard what was said,
And she shrieked, and went into hysterics, and cried
as her husband was dead.
Till at last she could bear it no longer, so she
moaned and moved west'ard one day;
For it killed her, she said, to be watching while he
was a-dying that way.

Oh! a deep 'un was Molly, Lord bless you! She
made us look awfully small—
"Went off to her friends." We believed her; and
she never went off, sir, at all.
How she done it we never discovered; but she got
in them woods, past my nose—
Got clean in them woods to that blackguard, and
he got away in her clo's.

I see her come by as I fancied, and I gave her
"Good evenin'" as well,
And she nodded her head and went onward—did
ever ye hear such a sell?
It was him in her dress and her bonnet, he went and
he got slick away,
And we've never heard nowt o' the wiper, not a
whisper right up to to-day.

Yes, she'd gone to the woods to that villain, to the
bully who'd maimed her for life,
She had gone and she'd hugged him and kissed
him, I s'pose, like a dutiful wife.
Well, we waited a week; then come orders to beat
our way right through the wood,
And to capture the chap at all hazards, and shoot
him down dead if he stood.

And all as we found there was Molly, all white and
as weak as a rat,
Half-dressed and a-moanin' wi' terror and gnawing
her hands where she sat;
She'd 'a' stopped there and died of starvation to
give him more time to get free;
I could see the jade's game in a moment, and it
come like a bombshell on me.

For I saw on the face of the woman the red scar
stand out on the white,
Just the mark of the fist of the villain she 'd crept
there to aid in his flight;
And to think as she 'd perish o' hunger and suffer
the torments of hell
For the sake of the wretch who 'd half killed her and
had injured her baby as well.

No, she wasn 't not charged with a-aidin' and abettin'
the fellow's escape:
She was mad when we found her a-hidin', her reason
was clean out o' shape.
But she 's harmless enough, and she wanders, and
jabbers and jaws about him;
The folks about here knows her story, and humours
her every whim.

But don't talk to me about women; they ain't got
no reason nor brains,
And the man who goes in for to grip 'em is just a
big fool for his pains.
They 're a blow to the force, that they are, sir; they
sends all our best plans to pot;
They 're a mixture o' saint and o' devil, and a
darned contrydictory lot.



MISCELLANEOUS.

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THE DEVONSHIRE LANES.

I AM far from the land where my home is
located,
For the Devonshire hills are some distance from town;
I am roaming the country, and fancy it 's fated
The snow will at last condescend to come down.
In the creeks at my feet the wild sea dashes
white in,
Each moment the wind in intensity gains;
'Tis a scene for the Londoner's heart to delight in,
When viewed from a bank in the Devonshire
Lanes.

The hedgerows are set with the crystals of winter,
And ripe berries hiding from gay-feathered
thieves;



MISCELLANEOUS

THE [illegible]



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And she left us like open-mouthed dummies
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what she'd gotten to say—
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he'd never been harsh till that day."

A STREET SONG.

WE are told of the rose, that, though altered its name,
It would still be as fragrant and sweet;
And of course the logician would argue the same
If the subject discussed were a street.
There 's a thoroughfare fringing a Grecian abode—
'Tis of that, dearest reader, I 'd talk—
It is close to the famous-in-song City Road,
And is known as the Shepherdess Walk.

Now I won't for a moment endeavour to dwell
On the argument quoted above;
Since I own, though the place has an evident smell,
It is not of the kind that I love.

For the region is one where the costers prevail
(You can fancy the dainties they hawk),
And the odour of roses is not on the gale
One encounters in Shepherdess Walk.

What a change from the days when they christened the spot!
Then of course it was charming and green;
And Strephon might oft, when the mornings were hot,
Here with coy little Chloe be seen.
Now I gaze with disgust on the ill-favoured boys,
And the bold little hussies who gawk,
While I sigh for that era of pastoral joys
When here might a shepherdess walk.

A SILLY OLD MAN.

A SEA-SIDE DITTY.

MID all the nasty things that come to make
our tempers smart.
It's very nice in middle age to have a
childish heart,
To feel—although you've got a house, and taxes
coming due—
The little joys of early life possess a charm for you.
My boys and girls are growing up; I'm fifty in a
day;
And all the hair that time has left has turned a
doubtful grey;
And yet I jump and skip about and sing a song of
glee,
Because we're off to spend a month beside the
sounding sea.

Where I shall wear my holland clothes, and tuck
them up and wade,
And buy myself an air-balloon, a bucket, and a
spade.

I've packed my box and corded it, and seen my
boys to bed,
And now I'm in the drawing-room and standing
on my head;
I really can't contain myself, I shout and rub my
hands,—
Oh, won't I build a castle with a moat upon the
sands!
I know this week I've lost a lot of money upon
'Change,
I know the kitchen boiler's burst and spoilt the
kitchen range,
I know my wife declares she wants another hundred
pounds,
And I should weep and tear my hair because I've
ample grounds;
But visions of to-morrow's bliss bid all my sorrows
fade,—
There's comfort in an air-balloon, a bucket, and a
spade.

I ought to be a solemn chap, and dress in black,
and frown,

And do as other fathers do when going out of
town;
I ought to count the cost of it, and look extremely
riled,
And swear that all the packing-up will send me
nearly wild.
And when I reach the lovely sea I ought to take a
seat,
Or walk about a mile a day and grumble at the
heat;
But oh, I can't contain myself, I 'm off my head
with joy,
And won't I get my trousers wet and be a naughty
boy!
For I shall wear my holland clothes, and tuck them
up and wade,
And buy myself an air-balloon, a bucket, and a
spade.

FICKLE AS THE WIND.

BENEATH the shade of waving boughs
The gallant clasped the maiden's hand,
And urged her, with impassioned vows,
To fly to some far-distant land,
Where ev'ry joy their love would bless:
The maiden blushed, and faltered "Yes."

The soft breeze sighed around the tree,
And whispered to the flutt'ring leaf:
Come, soar, my dainty love, with me,
Beyond the realms of care and grief.
And straight—so well his suit he prest—
The leaf lay smiling on his breast.

But soon the breeze his arms unwound;
For leaves more lovely caught his eye,
And on the cold polluted ground
He left his love to weep and sigh.
Then men with harsh unthinking tread
Passed o'er the leaf and crushed it dead.

Two moons within his false embrace
The gallant held the trusting maid;
Then cast her on the world, to face
The fate of innocence betrayed.
Ah, maid and leaf! too late ye find
What fickle things are man and wind!



A SET OFF.

WITH aching heart beneath my vest
I wandered through the busy Strand,
And like a patriot felt opprest
By ills that hurt my native land.
"The knife," I mused, "the Tories wield
Is keener than the winds of May."
Just then a bill these words revealed:
"Asparagus is cheap to-day."

Like one transfixed I stood, and read
That notice in a fruit-shop hung;
Grim sorrow flapped her wings and fled,—
Again the world was green and young.
"Let tyrants smirch our fame," I cried,
"And vote our hard-won wealth away,
We yet may stem the rising tide:
Asparagus is cheap to-day!"

What matters though the foolish swine
  Obey the madcap pig-herd's shout,
And grunting in unsav'ry line
  Upturn sweet pastures snout to snout!
What matters though our noble knights
  By such a herd are held at bay!
Here 's solace for our bitter slights:
  "Asparagus is cheap to-day."

For one short moment let us cease
  To mourn the loss of mighty ships—
Forget how tax and rate increase,
  And all that now the nation "hips."
From dreary paths of shame and guile,
  To verdant fields my footsteps stray,
Dame Fortune is not wholly vile:
  "Asparagus is cheap to-day."

A PASTORAL.

I SAT beside my Phillis fair,
Just hidden from the noonday glare,
Where drooping branches caught the rays
That came upon my love to gaze;
Then sent them all to dance about
Upon the velvet sward without.
Sweet sentinels are leafy boughs
To guard a lover's sighs and vows.

The scent of woodland blossoms filled
The shady arbour, hushed and stilled.
Old numbers through my mem'ry rang,
And, dreaming, I to Phillis sang:
"My love is like the gentle breeze
That sighs among the waving trees,
Or like the sun that warms the earth,
And gives each gentle flow'ret birth.

"My love is like the sweetest rose
That in a southern garden grows;
Nay, give her place—rose, breeze, and sun,
My lady fair is all in one."
So sang I to my love, and she
Upturned her deep blue eyes to me,
And raised her finger's rosy tips
To lay them on her laughing lips.

"Oh, fie! my Damon, fie!" she cried,
"In borrowed plumes why dress your bride?
The breeze is but a changing wind
That cuts and kills in mood unkind;
The sun will scorch the bud new born
The sweetest rose has many a thorn.
Oh, let me be, dear love, to you
A simple woman, fond and true."

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